

# The Footnotes

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\* When the eight members of the Footnotes beach band broke up in **1971**, they had no idea that 30 years later they would be included in the **South Carolina R&B/Beach Music Hall of Fame**.

"We were together years ago when we were in our teens and 20s," said member Johnny Hilton. The band, composed of Sumter, SC natives, formed in **1967**. "We actually played while we were in college. We were in different places, but we would meet at the jobs and we'd play," Hilton said.



Steve Morris plays trombone and sings backup with the group. "Actually there were two different groups, a band called the Jackstones... the rest were in a band called the Villagers," Morris said, The two bands merged to form The Footnotes.

"We traveled a good bit ... the University of Tennessee, the University of Alabama, Auburn University. We played in concert with Jerry Butler up at the old field house in Clemson, " Morris said.

The band got many of their gigs due to their frequent appearances at Myrtle Beach. "They'd have a headliner down at the Beach Club, and we could back them up. A lot of the college kids would come in during the summer and hear the band and we'd get bookings from that," Morris explained.

The band did have some personnel changes early on, but the eight members who were playing when the band dissolved, are the eight members who are playing with the band today. "That's what's so cool about it," Hilton said.

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The Footnotes performed regularly at the Beach Club and worked as the back-up band for *Jackie Wilson*, *Billy Stewart*, *The Drifters*, and *Clifford Curry*. They also traveled the Southeast playing for clubs and private functions.

**After they separated in 1971, the group did not play together again until 1999**, when they came together for a Sumter fundraiser. The reunion performance was such a success, band members Johnny Hilton, Steve Morris, Kenny Bell, Steve Mims, Rick Paulus, Hugh Hodge, Charles Stafford, and Bert Taylor decided to continue performing as The Footnotes.

This reunion led to their nomination for the prestigious award. "We were nominated by Skipper 'Water Dog' Hough," Hilton said. "We knew him years ago when we were playing the first time."

The Footnotes were notified in September 2001 of the honor, and they were officially inducted on October 27, 2001. A letter from Governor Jim Hodges read in part: ***"Thanks in large part to you ... beach music has become recognized worldwide as a unique and enjoyment musical art form. All South Carolinians join me in thanking you for using your God-given talent to advance the delightful sounds of this great genre of music."***

Hilton said of the band's reunion: "It was magic. We had such a great time that we said we've got to keep doing this. Its really been magic ever since. We're having the greatest time playing together."

"We were kind of best friends in high school," Morris said. "It's been a lot of fun having our children see us do it and hear us."

Band member Charles Stafford has performed with many bands through the years, but says he has the most fund playing with The Footnotes. "I think it's the best band I've probably ever played with," he said. "I was the oldest member of the band when we started ... we had 18 and 19 year old guys playing with the like of Jackie Wilson, The Drifters ... we held our own pretty much, " Stafford said.

Remembering the band's early days, Stafford had several amusing memories. "We used to play at Georgia Tech and the University of Georgia. We had a habit after it was over. At frat row they had a basketball court. At 2:30 in the morning, at about 40 degrees, we'd play basketball before coming back to Columbia," he said, laughing.

After another gig, the band used cardboard to slide on a frozen pond at 3 a.m. When they heard the ice begin to crack, they decided to call it a night.

Stafford recalled the band playing at the Beach Club, particularly on holiday weekends like July 4th and Labor Day. "That was the Mecca for all the bands of the time. You had reached a certain level of success when you played there." Stafford said.

Some songs the band likes to perform include "She Shot a Hole In My Soul," "It's Alright," "Summertime," "Higher and Higher" and a medley of tunes by the Platters

"Everybody just falls into a groove and just feels the music," said Stafford. He said of the band's reunion: "It felt like it hadn't been 30 years, it felt like 30 days."

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\* Article By: SARA GERALD FLUDD, Item Feature Writer, PANORAMA "Footnotes in history", Thursday, NOVEMBER 1, 2001